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House of Representatives

Remarks of
The Honorable William Delahunt of Massachusetts
Honoring Master Chief Boatswain's Mate John E. Downey

US House of Representatives
June 19, 2008

Madam Speaker-

I rise today so that my colleagues in the House of Representatives can join me in honoring the exemplary career of a distinguished member of the United States Coast Guard, and a good friend of mine – Master Chief Boatswain's Mate John E. "Jack" Downey, Ancient Keeper.

Jack Downey has led an exemplary career, having served in the United States Coast Guard for over 40 years. His familiarity with the treacherous local waters around Cape Cod is legendary. He has brought that knowledge to a wide variety of operational, command, and staff assignments over the years, including five Officer-in-Charge multi-mission ashore assignments, two Officer-in-Charge afloat assignments, and a position as a rescue boat crewman for water take-offs and landings.

In 1984, he served as Officer-In-Charge at Station Woods Hole. After a stint in command of Coast Guard Cutter *Towline*, a 65-foot harbor tug/icebreaker, Jack returned to the Cape to take control of Coast Guard Station Chatham, which is located on the elbow of Cape Cod. In Chatham, as my friend and colleague Mr. Oberstar already noted, upon taking command Jack faced a fishing community that had lost faith in the Coast Guard. In a very short period of time, Jack made the Chatham station one of the finest in the Coast Guard and quickly won the respect of the entire Cape Cod fishing community. Downey would also serve as Officer-In-Charge of Station Brant Point in Nantucket and would eventually return to Woods Hole in 2005 to take command of Coast Guard Cutter *Hammerhead*.

It is without question that Jack has served honorably in all of his assignments and has been given numerous awards. Most notably, Jack became the first recipient of the Joshua James Keeper Award – the "Ancient Keeper", which is given to Coast Guard members in recognition of their longevity of service and their outstanding performance in boat forces

operations. Joshua James, referred to as the world's most celebrated lifesaver, rescued over 600 people during his 60 years of service in the 1800s. Jack embodies the traits of Joshua James, traits that all Coast Guardsmen aspire to.

Additionally, the Coast Guard presented to Jack the Meritorious Service Medal with a gold star and operational distinguishing device, the Coast Guard Commendation Medal with three gold stars and operational distinguishing device, and the Letter of Commendation with operational distinguishing device. Jack was also awarded the prestigious Navy League Douglas A. Munro Award for his inspirational leadership and professional competence.

A friend of mine, Retired Rear Admiral Jack Linnon, once called Jack Downey an Officer-in-Charge that he would entrust his own child to; a fact that is especially touching considering the dangers of the profession. "Youngsters turned over to his charge," Linnon said, "when transferred, had grown both in their professional development but also in maturity." Jack's greatest legacy may not be his personal heroics, but the wisdom, guidance and experience he has shared with innumerable Coast Guardsmen, from cadets to commanders.

Since 2006, Jack has served as the District One Command Master Chief at the First District Headquarters in Boston. By leaving this position, the Coast Guard loses one of its finest, most talented men. He has earned the respect and admiration from us and from people throughout New England. On behalf of a very grateful constituency, I want to say thank you to Jack and congratulations on a job well done.